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Summary record of the 24th meeting
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Chair: Mr. Bhattarai ..... (Nepal)
Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Ruiz Massieu

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Organization of work (A/C.5/70/L.25)

1. **The Chair** invited the Committee to consider the proposed tentative and provisional programme of work for the first part of the resumed seventieth session, prepared on the basis of the note by the Secretariat on the status of preparedness of documentation (A/C.5/70/L.25).

2. **Mr. Bamrungphong** (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group was committed to thorough consideration of all agenda items, including those deferred from the sixty-ninth session. In particular, it hoped that delegations would engage constructively in discussions on the operational arrangements of the Advisory Committee, a matter that should not be deferred further.

3. The Group was concerned at the status of documentation for the resumed part of the session. Although noticeable improvements had been made, the late issuance of important reports was a chronic problem that hindered the ability of the Committee to complete its work effectively. Efforts should be made to improve the Committee's working methods through the timely submission of Secretariat and Advisory Committee reports in all official languages.

4. The Group was disappointed that the Secretary-General had yet to provide a comprehensive proposal for the delivery of mandates in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, within the broader United Nations system, including the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the regional commissions and the United Nations Development Account, as requested in General Assembly resolution 70/247. That raised questions about how serious the Secretariat was about adhering to the mandates given to it by the Assembly. The Group looked forward to receiving a formal communication from the Secretary-General clarifying the reasons for his inability to meet the deadline and providing a clear timeline for submission of a proposal to the Advisory Committee.

5. In view of the delays in the provision of information to Member States at the main part of the session, the Group looked forward to a comprehensive report by the Secretary-General fully responding to Assembly mandates and addressing the concerns of Member States regarding adequate financing for the United Nations system in the context of the 2030 Agenda, guaranteeing equal attention to both the international and regional levels.

6. **Mr. Cortorreal** (Dominican Republic), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that the Community was extremely concerned at the delay in the submission of the comprehensive proposal for the effective and efficient delivery of mandates in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. The Secretariat must comply with the mandates entrusted to it by the Assembly and give priority to the 2030 Agenda to reflect the importance that Member States attached to it.

7. The Community was also concerned at the delay in amending the Staff Regulations and Rules in accordance with General Assembly resolution 70/244, on the United Nations common system. Delays in the submission of reports hindered the ability of Member States to take informed decisions and had a negative impact on mandate delivery. The Secretariat should take the necessary remedial actions to expedite the submission of reports for consideration by the Assembly.

8. A further concern was the lack of progress in reviewing the current arrangements for the funding and backstopping of special political missions, an issue deferred on several occasions. His delegation hoped for comprehensive reform at the current part of the resumed session. Member States should engage proactively in order to find common ground and improve the current, dysfunctional system. In that regard he noted the views of the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture and the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations. Decisions taken must be honoured, and the time had come to make progress on the issue. Member States had a collective responsibility to respond to the challenges that the Organization faced.

9. With regard to the operational arrangements of the Advisory Committee, the Community recognized the crucial role that the Advisory Committee played as an independent expert body in advising the Assembly and the Fifth Committee in the performance of functions that had a great impact on the United Nations

and its specialized agencies. The scope of the work of the Organization had become broader and the need for resources was growing. It was important to review the operational arrangements of the Advisory Committee, including the conditions of service of its members, in recognition of its enhanced status and to enable its members to fully perform their functions.

10. Measures must be taken to strengthen accountability at the institutional and individual levels in order to improve the administrative and budgetary functioning of the Organization. It was also important to ensure the independence of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU). Lastly, delegations must do their utmost to ensure that the Committee completed its work on time.

11. **Mr. Kisoka** (United Republic of Tanzania), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the Committee must ensure strict observance of the principles of inclusiveness, openness and transparency in conducting its negotiations and should avoid closed discussions in small configurations. The programme of work should be adjusted to reflect progress in negotiations.

12. The Committee's workload had increased compared to previous sessions but the allocated time remained unchanged. Innovative ideas were needed to conclude all items on time and, to that end, additional efforts were needed to ensure the timely availability of documents.

13. The Group looked forward to concluding the negotiations on the funding and backstopping arrangements for special political missions and the operational arrangements of the Advisory Committee, and would not endorse any ideas that would entail business as usual. It was unfortunate that the Committee had failed to conclude its negotiations on human resources management at the sixty-ninth session and the Group remained open to ideas on how to proceed.

14. With regard to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Group was seriously disappointed that the Secretary-General had not yet presented a proposal on funding, as called for by the Assembly. It was also concerned that the consolidation of inputs from key stakeholders, including funds, programmes and specialized agencies, had yet to take place, that a number of issues still needed to be addressed, and that there was a lack of common understanding on the part of United Nations system organizations and departments on ways to address the matter. The performance of the Secretary-General and his senior managers would be assessed on the basis of the approach taken to those issues and not on the basis of how many overseas trips he and his managers conducted during his time in office.

15. **Mr. Vrailas** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that the timely submission of all required documentation in all official languages was important to facilitate the quality and speed of discussions. Many of the reports on human resources management were, however, over 18 months old, and by the seventy-first session the Committee would have before it updated reports on all human resources management issues. He called for a pragmatic approach to tackling other issues deferred from previous sessions, including the resident coordinator system. However, newer items — construction and property management and special political missions — also deserved the utmost attention.

16. Following the adoption of a programme budget for the new biennium, the revised estimates to be presented must correspond to mandated activities and be in line with established budget procedures. In particular, with regard to revised estimates relating to the future of United Nations peace operations and the pending report on the 2030 Agenda, the principles of effectiveness, efficiency and budgetary discipline were more important than ever, as emerging and growing challenges gave rise to new functions and mandates, requiring new approaches.

17. Comprehensive proposals were needed in respect of major change initiatives in order to avoid a piecemeal approach to budgeting. That implied managing for results as well as reprioritization and redeployment of mandates and resources. His delegation sought clarification of how and when proposals on those change initiatives would be presented, given the Committee's heavy workload. There was still substantial scope for improving the functioning of the United Nations by taking full advantage of new information technology platforms in the interest of a leaner and more mobile Organization. The European Union remained committed to working

closely with all partners in a spirit of openness, transparency and constructive cooperation in order to reach decisions by consensus.

18. **Mr. Guo** Xuejun (China) said that the Committee must improve its own working methods and efficiency in order to enhance the efficiency of the Organization as a whole. Coordination between Member States, the Secretariat and the Advisory Committee should be strengthened to ensure that the Committee concluded its work on time.

19. As it was the first year of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it was regrettable that the Secretariat had not yet submitted a report on its implementation. His delegation hoped that the report would be submitted in time to ensure sufficient allocation of resources for implementation of the Agenda.

20. Member States had demonstrated vigorous political support for the work of the Committee but that support must be translated into pragmatic action. Concerning the financing of special political missions, his delegation stood ready to participate constructively in the deliberations with a view to reaching consensus.

21. The Secretariat needed to improve its internal management and financial discipline and make judicious use of the resources contributed by Member States. It should implement the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit and the Board of Auditors, as well as the measures approved by the Assembly to strengthen internal management. Lastly, the Organization should ensure strict adherence to the budget approved for the biennium 2016-2017.

22. **Mr. Minami** (Japan) said that the positive contributions of the Secretariat and the Bureau, and the flexibility demonstrated by all Member States, had made it possible for the Committee to complete its work on time at the main part of the session. Many important issues were now before the Committee, and it was vital to build on the positive momentum created. The Secretariat and the Advisory Committee should ensure the timely submission of documentation. His delegation would engage in all discussions in a positive and constructive manner in order to achieve consensus on all items in accordance with General Assembly resolution 41/213.

23. **Ms. Coleman** (United States of America) said that the Secretary-General had initiated several critical reform initiatives designed to make the Organization more modern, nimble and effective. It was important to seize all opportunities to push forward with change and ensure that the reforms reached their full potential.

24. The Secretariat should ensure the thorough implementation of Umoja, the International Public Sector Accounting Standards and the information and communications technology strategy. For reforms still in the development stage, such as the global service delivery model, it should continue their thoughtful development. All those reforms and others such as mobility and flexible workspace were vital pieces of an interlocking change initiative that would make the United Nations the best that it could be.

25. Her delegation looked forward to consideration of the report of the Board of Auditors on the strategic heritage plan of the United Nations Office at Geneva and the steps that could be taken to ensure good governance and accountability. In addition, the report of the Board on information and communications technology should provide helpful insights into the challenges in implementing a comprehensive information and communications technology strategy for the Organization.

26. Concerning construction, establishing a rationalized maintenance programme through the strategic capital review and ensuring the most efficient use of space through flexible workspace strategies were key elements of a wider strategy to improve asset management. In combination with related reforms, such as Umoja and the global service delivery model, those efforts would help to optimize the United Nations global footprint.

27. Conflict prevention was key to peace and stability around the world. Her delegation was interested in ensuring that the special political mission in Burundi and other activities, such as those relating to the Islamic Republic of Iran and Al-Qaida, were funded in order to achieve the objectives set by Member States. Lastly, she looked forward to the report of the Secretary-General on how the United Nations would reprioritize resources and activities to best support Member States in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals.

28. **Mr. Khalizov** (Russian Federation) said that significant attention needed to be paid to human resources management at the resumed part of the session. The fact that decisions had been postponed

was a reflection of the serious discord among Member States and their reluctance to adopt various proposals by the Secretary-General. Mobility was an especially crucial issue; he trusted that the Committee would be provided with further information on the parameters of the initiative and its potential impact on the activities of the Organization.

29. Concerning capital investment projects, the incremental recapitalization approach to maintaining property, with its significant financial consequences, required closer examination and greater justification. The Assembly should adopt decisions on repair or construction projects on a case-by-case basis.

30. A further issue with significant budgetary implications for the Organization was the way in which medical insurance obligations for United Nations retirees were met. His delegation was not convinced that there were advantages in the pay-as-you-accrue approach compared to the current pay-as-you-go scheme, and believed that it was too early to take any substantive decisions.

31. It was regrettable that the Committee had been unable to approve proposals on the operational arrangements of the Advisory Committee, as the burden on its expert members had increased significantly in recent years. The Advisory Committee should be converted to a standing body and the conditions of service of its members improved. His delegation hoped for a positive decision on the issue without further delay. Lastly, his delegation had traditionally supported the activities of the Joint Inspection Unit; it was essential for the Unit to be given the resources it required to fully discharge its mandate.

32. **The Chair** said that he took it that the Committee wished to approve the proposed programme of work on the understanding that it would be adjusted as necessary to make best use of available time as the first part of the resumed session progressed.

Agenda item 134: Programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017 (*continued*)

***Progress in the implementation of the organizational resilience management system* (A/70/7/Add.41 and A/70/660)**

33. **Mr. Boyd** (Director, Facilities and Commercial Services Division), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on progress in the implementation of the organizational resilience management system (A/70/660), said that the system provided guidance on how different stakeholders contributing to emergency preparedness, prevention, response and recovery should collaborate to ensure resilience by the Organization when facing events that could cause operational disruption. The report summarized the implementation of the system at United Nations Headquarters in New York, as well as at offices away from Headquarters, and in regional commissions and in field missions of the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations, Field Support and Political Affairs. The report demonstrated that the strategy on how to extend the system to the specialized agencies, funds and programmes had been successful, and provided information on the progress made in implementing the system framework in those entities.

34. At United Nations Headquarters, collaboration between the Departments of Management, Safety and Security, and Public Information had become a regular routine, as had collaboration in the bodies specifically created for emergency management, such as the Senior Emergency Policy Team, the Crisis Operations Group and the Emergency Operations Centre. The organizational resilience management system framework had been promulgated to members of those entities and online courses on emergency preparedness and face-to-face training had been offered to improve the ability of staff to act in emergency situations.

35. Significant progress had been made in developing and applying the organizational resilience management system across the United Nations common system. Offices away from Headquarters and the regional commissions, in particular, had reported impressive progress in implementation of the system, which facilitated joint emergency management by all United Nations organizations at the same location and created synergy gains. After full implementation of the system at Headquarters for the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations, Field Support and Political Affairs, the policy had been promulgated to the field with a target of summer 2016 for full implementation. An assessment of the status of implementation had been undertaken in all peacekeeping and special political missions; remote support and review of emergency plans in peacekeeping missions were ongoing. Assistance missions had been provided for the United Nations Mission in Liberia and the United Nations

Mission in Kosovo in December 2015 and February 2016, with dates for other assistance missions to be confirmed.

36. The system had been endorsed by the High-level Committee on Management and the Chief Executives Board for Coordination in late 2014, and efforts were under way in 16 specialized agencies, funds and programmes to initiate or strengthen implementation of the system.

37. The organizational resilience management system embodied coordination, harmonization and integration, and prescribed collaboration among stakeholders in emergency preparedness, prevention, response and recovery. The system was a means of emergency management that built on existing capacities and mandated responsibilities of United Nations departments, funds and programmes and specialized agencies. It should not be seen as a monolithic programme or project with a start and an end. Rather, it reflected an ongoing way of doing smart business by mainstreaming emergency management components into day-to-day business. There were no costs other than those incurred in coordination.

38. The system provided key performance indicators as benchmarks for measuring progress in implementation. The indicators covered five areas: policy; governance; maintenance, exercise and review; risk management; and planning. The policy indicators assessed the availability of a policy on organizational resilience management and its promulgation, including its integrative and harmonizing characteristics, while the indicators on governance assessed whether responsibility for overseeing the production and implementation of deliverables was clear and built on existing structures. For maintenance, exercise and review, the system provided for systematic training, while experience in the management of real emergency incidents or simulation exercises were the most important sources for review and improvement of the system. Risk management covered operational risks encompassed by enterprise risk management registers. The system required risk assessments to be carried out through a holistic, systemic approach that covered security, medical and business continuity risks. Emergency plans needed to be harmonized and updated frequently to ensure that they were fit for purpose.

39. In addition to implementation of the organizational resilience management system, United Nations Headquarters had implemented all 25 recommendations emanating from the after-action review of storm Sandy. The vulnerability of Headquarters to extensive flooding had been mitigated and the degree of preparedness greatly strengthened.

40. **Mr. Ruiz Massieu** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/70/7/Add.41), said that the Advisory Committee welcomed the progress made in applying the organizational resilience management system, based on the coordination, harmonization and integration of different components contributing to a system-wide emergency management framework. The Advisory Committee recommended that the Assembly should take note of the progress made.

41. It was important to identify costs for all activities that supported organizational resilience. Implementation of the enterprise resource planning system in United Nations entities should facilitate the identification of such costs. Efforts to assess risks related to emergency management should be coordinated with the overall risk management framework of the Organization.

42. **Ms. Wairatpanij** (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, noting the progress in implementing the organizational resilience management system, welcomed the development of performance indicators as a tool for measuring progress. The Group noted the implementation of the system in offices away from Headquarters, regional commissions and field missions, and in the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system. She wished to know to what extent entities working in the same environment had harmonized and rationalized the initiative.

43. The Group noted the Secretary-General's efforts to assess and manage risks in the context of the emergency management framework, but emphasized the importance of including host countries in emergency planning at the country level.

44. Regarding the cost of implementing the organizational resilience management system, the Group recalled that, in its resolution 68/247 B, the Assembly had requested that progress reports should include a detailed accounting of the cost. It was disappointed that the current report did not fully respond to that request, and requested details of the full

cost. The Group also sought updated information on cost-sharing arrangements, including with funds and programmes, as well as on the involvement of host country authorities in implementation. Lastly, the Group would seek further information on insurance coverage pursuant to the after-action review of storm Sandy.

Agenda item 131: Financial reports and audited financial statements, and reports of the Board of Auditors (*continued*)

Report of the Board of Auditors on the strategic heritage plan of the United Nations Office at Geneva (A/70/569, A/70/585 and A/70/608)

Report of the Board of Auditors on progress in the handling of information and communications technology affairs in the Secretariat (A/70/581, A/70/607 and A/70/755)

45. **Mr. Mkumba** (Chair of the Audit Operations Committee of the Board of Auditors), introducing the report of the Board of Auditors on the strategic heritage plan of the United Nations Office at Geneva (A/70/569), said that the strategic heritage plan involved renovating the United Nations Office at Geneva to meet the requirements of the Organization and improve health, safety and working conditions. The report, sent to the Secretariat on 23 November 2015, was in response to the request made by the General Assembly in December 2013 for the Board to initiate oversight activities and report thereon.

46. The projected cost of the strategic heritage plan was SwF 836.5 million, or $869.54 million. Completion was expected in 2023, with implementation in two phases: the construction of the new building, scheduled to commence in 2017 and be completed by 2019; and the renovation of the existing buildings, to be completed in 2023.

47. While the Board had no objection to the commencement of the project as proposed by the Administration, it had concerns regarding timely completion and the overall cost. The strategic heritage plan management team had attempted to take into account the lessons learned from such projects as the capital master plan, but the real test was the extent to which those lessons were applied in practice. Similarly, while the governance structure was adequate, its effectiveness would become known only later. The aggressive timelines for seeking financial approvals and moving the project forward could challenge the Administration. Given the delays in the preliminary activities, close monitoring and a proactive approach would be required.

48. The envisaged completion of the design master plan by the lead design firm in March 2015 had been crucial as the plan defined the internal control framework, including quality assurance mechanisms, for design and construction. Completion of the evaluation of the building and in-depth site assessments, the concept or schematic design, the detailed designs for the construction of the new building, the renovation of conference building A, the protection of the historical archives against fire, the detailed cost estimates and the preparatory activity for tender documentation had also been expected in 2015. The fact that some 2015 targets had not been met could impede compliance with the project timelines and the firming-up of the cost estimates.

49. The strategic heritage plan management team had noted the lessons learned from previous projects with regard to scoping and associated costs, knowledge of local markets, the life cycle of assets, consultations with stakeholders, project manuals, risk management, change control and contingency management, but would reap the full benefits of such lessons only if they were embedded in the implementation of the project. The development of project manuals, including change controls, was important for internal control and must be expedited.

50. Some project design activities had overrun by as much as 56 days because of delays in retrieving archived documents for structural and geotechnical surveys, reviewing location information for intrusive tests, rescheduling surveys for locations initially described as inaccessible and revising the final concept design.

51. A consultant had used lump-sum estimates, based on historical local market conditions, for many costs, without a detailed supporting analysis. The allowances made for overheads, profits, consultants' fees and contingencies appeared to exceed industry standards. Although different pricing standards were used in the industry and the quantum of allowances depended on the nature of specific projects, cost estimates should be based on an established industry standard to increase transparency, objectivity and financial soundness.

52. A provisional Advisory Board had been constituted to provide independent advice on the project to the Director-General of the Office. A Steering Committee had been established to oversee the project and provide guidance on design, construction, budget and changes in scope. However, the terms of reference of the two bodies contained only preliminary information regarding their roles and responsibilities and did not define distinct mandates for them.

53. Robust internal control was needed to reduce the impact of delays of 28 days in the completion of the design master plan, 45 days in the completion of the concept design, 42 days in the start of detailed design for phase I of the new building, and 56 days in the start of detailed design for phase I of the renovation.

54. The project manual must be kept updated to enable internal control and the preparation of documentation on justifications, procedures and mechanisms for changes in the project scope, cost and schedule.

55. The Administration had confirmed to the Board that, to comply with the general principles governing procurement specified in the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations and the ethical standards and responsibilities set out in the United Nations Procurement Manual, it would make provision for security instruments, including performance and payment bonds, and financial protection, including the levying of liquidated damages, in case of default. A review of ongoing contracts, however, had revealed delays in delivery of various services and no provision for liquidated damages to compensate for delays attributable to contractors. One contract deviated from the Procurement Manual by limiting the contractor's liability. The procurement actions had thus diverged from the Financial Regulations and Rules and the Procurement Manual.

56. Risk assessment and mitigation was a priority for the strategic heritage plan. The primary risks were foreign currency exposure, since two currencies were involved; maintenance of the assets created; the stringent timelines, which involved coordinated actions by various parties; scope control, contingency spending and change orders; and the preservation of artworks. The Administration had taken action in response to the Board's recommendations intended to enhance the implementation process and mitigate risks.

57. Since the issuance of the report, the General Assembly had approved the project scope, schedule and estimated cost in a maximum amount of SwF 836.5 million for the period from 2014 to 2023, and had authorized the start of the renovation and construction phases. Its resolution 70/248 reflected some of the concerns highlighted in the report. In subsequent reports on the strategic heritage plan, the Board would examine the steps taken by the Administration to address its concerns.

58. Introducing the Board's report on progress in the handling of information and communications technology (ICT) affairs in the Secretariat (A/70/581), he said that ICT was essential to supporting United Nations activities at Headquarters and in the field. For the biennium 2014-2015, the Administration estimated that, excluding Umoja, its annual ICT budget had been $663.7 million and that it had employed an ICT workforce of nearly 4,400 people to support over 70,000 users at 376 locations.

59. The Board's first report on information and communications technology (A/67/651) had identified concerns regarding information security and had found that the Administration had failed to enforce a centralized ICT strategy, which it had been impossible to implement because the central ICT function lacked the authority to enforce change. No such strategy would succeed unless a number of managerial and structural issues were addressed.

60. Following the approval by the General Assembly in December 2014 of the revised strategy set out in the Secretary-General's report at the sixty-ninth session on ICT in the United Nations (A/69/517), the Board's current report (A/70/581) focused on the Administration's progress in addressing the Board's earlier concerns about information security and the development and implementation of the revised strategy.

61. The revised strategy, involving restructuring of the Office of Information and Communications Technology, was being implemented under the leadership of the Chief Information Technology Officer, appointed in May 2013, and represented a good initial response to the Board's 2012 report (A/67/651). The strategy focused on the standardization of policies, applications and procedures and the harmonization of support structures to establish the necessary governance, infrastructure and technical

capacity. Information security policies had been updated; regional technology centres, an enterprise data centre and a global Umoja service help desk had been established; and an application management strategy had been developed.

62. Many of the activities, however, were still in the preparatory phase and, until the managerial and structural issues identified in the Board's 2012 report were resolved, the pace of substantive change would be limited. The implementation of the strategy relied on collaboration rather than clear business rules. The Secretary-General did not expect to issue an updated bulletin setting out revised policies and procedures, including delegations of authority, until the first quarter of 2016. Agreement on which activities required strong central control and which merited operational freedom had not been reached.

63. The Administration had improved information security by deploying an intrusion detection system and updating information security policies. It had strengthened desktop and network security at Headquarters and introduced mandatory training courses, but the authority and capacity to ensure compliance with information security policies and procedures, particularly outside Headquarters, were lacking.

64. The Board could not provide assurances that the revised strategy would be implemented on schedule and within budget. Progress had been slower than the Administration had expected when it had developed its plans in 2013. The ambitious timetable adopted did not reflect an understanding of the challenges involved. Despite the Administration's confidence that it had acted within existing resources, essential budget and expenditure data for the majority of the projects underpinning the strategy were missing and the Board did not believe that the budgets and costs were adequately overseen and controlled.

65. As requested by the General Assembly, the Administration had attempted a five-year indicative ICT budget projection, but had based it on incomplete data, in particular from the Department of Field Support, which accounted for 72 per cent of ICT expenditure.

66. The Board had noted in its previous report (A/67/651) that the revised strategy must evolve over time and would not succeed without the support of heads of business units. The Secretary-General had acknowledged that the strategy depended on clear governance, strong leadership and the optimal use of resources. Significant improvements were needed in those areas. The Administration must ensure unity of purpose by showing strong leadership and updating policies and procedures to implement the Chief Information Technology Officer's mandate. Departments must align their strategies and work plans with the revised strategy and take demonstrable action to support it.

67. With a view to implementing the strategy, the Board had made a further seven recommendations, all of which had been accepted by the Administration, one of them partially. Of the 16 recommendations made in the Board's 2012 report (A/67/651), all of which had been accepted by the Administration, two had been implemented and the remaining 14 were being implemented. The Board was satisfied, despite the issues raised in its latest report (A/70/581), that management was committed to implementing its recommendations.

68. **Mr. Baez** (Chief, Policy and Oversight Coordination Service), introducing the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors contained in its report on the strategic heritage plan of the United Nations Office at Geneva (A/70/585), said that the Administration accepted seven of the Board's eight recommendations, addressing project and change control materials, risk management, donation and voluntary contribution policies, governance and procurement, and partially agreed with the remaining one, concerning cost estimation. The Secretary-General provided further information in his report.

69. The Administration appreciated the spirit of cooperation in which the Board had conducted its audit, the overall finding that nothing prevented the approval of the project and the fact that its report had been available for consideration during the approval process.

70. **Ms. Riazi** (Chief Information Technology Officer), introducing the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors contained in its report on progress in the handling of ICT affairs in the Secretariat (A/70/607), said that the Administration had accepted all the Board's recommendations, one of them partially, for the reasons set out in the report. The audit had been

undertaken 8 months into the 60-month implementation period of the ICT strategy, before the General Assembly had considered the budget proposal. At that time, implementation had been in its formative stages, but much progress had been made since.

71. A lack of transparency in the management of ICT resources had been identified in the Board's report and during the assessment on which the strategy had been based. Although ICT budget structures and fragmentation made resource management challenging, the ongoing governance measures, the delegation of authority for ICT and the implementation of Umoja would improve visibility and decision-making.

72. The Board had noted that some components of the enterprise delivery framework, such as the enterprise data centres, enterprise application centres and regional technology centres, had not been established. Some, however, had become operational after the Board had made its assessment. The consolidation of ICT resources in an enterprise delivery framework in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 69/262 and 70/248 was a high priority.

73. The Administration acknowledged the absence of data from the Department of Field Support, mentioned previously by the Advisory Committee and by Fifth Committee members in their consideration of the implementation of the strategy. The Department of Field Support had renewed its commitment to the strategy, and a Secretariat-wide assessment of ICT would be presented at the seventy-first session.

74. The Board had again noted the tension, highlighted in its previous report (A/67/651), between operational freedom and central control in information security. The authority given to her in resolution 69/262 was being enforced and her Office had taken stricter Organization-wide measures to address the matter.

75. Governance and accountability must be enhanced and fragmentation and duplication eliminated across the Secretariat, including field missions. The instances of fragmentation identified by the Board were being addressed through consultation and institutional means rather than on a case-by-case basis.

76. She appreciated the constructive spirit in which the Board discharged its oversight function. Its contribution to the ICT strategy had been extremely valuable and the implementation of its recommendations by her Office would improve resource management and efficiency.

77. **Mr. Ruiz Massieu** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the Advisory Committee's report on the report of the Board of Auditors on the strategic heritage plan of the United Nations Office at Geneva (A/70/608), said that the Advisory Committee noted the stringent project timeline and the delays in project activities. The Advisory Committee concurred with the Board's recommendation that the timelines should be met without reducing the quality and scope of deliverables.

78. The Advisory Committee agreed that the project cost estimates should be transparent and verifiable and the preliminary budget estimates updated. Its recommendation that SwF 836.5 million should be approved as the maximum overall cost of the project was subject to further reviews of annual budget performance.

79. With regard to governance, greater clarity was needed regarding the roles and responsibilities of the Steering Committee and the Advisory Board. Once the governance framework was approved by the General Assembly, any changes should be considered by the Assembly.

80. Strict compliance with United Nations regulations and rules, procurement policies and administrative procedures was needed. Continuous assurance from the Board regarding the governance framework, internal controls and management practices was essential.

81. Introducing the Advisory Committee's report on the report of the Board of Auditors on progress in the handling of ICT affairs in the Secretariat (A/70/755), he said that the Advisory Committee recommended that the General Assembly should request the Board to submit annual progress reports during the five-year implementation period of the ICT strategy. It was concerned about the lack of effective governance, management and operational arrangements. The failure to address the managerial and structural issues identified in the Board's previous report (A/67/651) was a major risk.

82. The General Assembly's requests regarding the central leadership of the Chief Information Technology

Officer and appropriate delegation of authority must be complied with without delay. The Advisory Committee recommended that the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to expedite issuance of the relevant documents, including at least one Secretary-General's bulletin, administrative instructions and technical procedures for the Office of Information and Communications Technology. To avoid the disagreements between stakeholders described in the Board's report, which posed risks to the operations of the Organization and could result in inefficient resource use, the Secretary-General should clarify responsibilities with regard to ICT.

83. Regarding investments, ICT projects should be subject to internal vetting procedures, with proposals explicitly presented in the relevant budget documents. Initiatives with total costs above a given threshold, for example $1 million, should be supported by a business case and information regarding resource requirements, with a level of detail commensurate with the size of the project.

84. ICT-related proposals in peacekeeping budgets should be centrally examined before submission to the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts. The Office of Information and Communications Technology should be engaged in budget preparation from the outset, providing instructions on proposals on the basis of Secretariat-wide priorities.

85. With regard to the Secretary-General's 10-point information security action plan, duplication in information security should be eliminated. All staff should complete the information security awareness training.

86. Comprehensive data relating to the indicative five-year budget projection for all Secretariat entities should be provided to the General Assembly in the Secretary-General's next report on the ICT strategy. The Secretary-General should ensure that all Secretariat entities aligned their ICT activities with the strategy, in accordance with the decisions of the General Assembly.

87. **Ms. Wairatpanij** (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group attached great importance to oversight of the strategic heritage plan and ICT. The comments and recommendations of the Board of Auditors and the Advisory Committee were essential to project implementation.

88. The delay between the Committee's consideration of the strategic heritage plan and the introduction of the Board's report (A/70/569) had impeded decision-making. In future, the Board's reports should be introduced when the Committee considered the strategic heritage plan. The Group took note of the Board's findings and recommendations related to activities in 2015, the delay in the project design, the lessons learned from the capital master plan and other projects, the preliminary budget and cost estimates, the governance structure, internal controls, risk management, and procurement and contracting.

89. The Group acknowledged the Administration's efforts to ensure that cost estimates were accurate and looked forward to the completion of the project within the agreed maximum cost. Voluntary contributions should be included in the total budget, and be documented and reported to the General Assembly in the Secretary-General's annual progress reports.

90. Lessons learned from other capital projects should be applied, taking into account local characteristics. The mistakes made during the capital master plan must not be repeated.

91. The Secretary-General should present detailed information regarding the scope and composition of and the technical expertise, decision-making mechanisms and functional arrangements for the governance structure, defining clear and distinct roles and responsibilities for the Steering Committee and the Advisory Board.

92. With regard to the Board's report on progress in the handling of ICT affairs in the Secretariat (A/70/581), the Board's future reports should, like its reports on the strategic heritage plan, be introduced when the Committee considered the matter. The Board's comments and recommendations remained valid despite the late introduction of the report. Those recommendations on the ICT strategy should be implemented.

93. The Board's findings in its latest report related to the standardization and harmonization of policies and procedures in various support structures; the expected benefits of the revised strategy; governance and management; information security; and the schedule and budget projection for the revised strategy. The Board's recommendations, particularly on the assessment of the expected benefits of the revised strategy, must be implemented.

94. An accurate ICT budget projection covering field offices and peacekeeping operations must be made, and assurance that the revised strategy would be implemented within budget and on schedule must be provided.

95. With regard to governance and management, further efforts must be made to address the delay in updating accountability arrangements and delegations of authority. The Group would seek information on the updating of policies to reflect the central authority of the Chief Information Technology Officer in information security.

Agenda item 140: Joint Inspection Unit (A/70/34 and A/70/716)

96. **Mr. Achamkulangare** (Chair, Joint Inspection Unit), introducing the report of the Joint Inspection Unit for 2015 and programme of work for 2016 (A/70/34), said that two significant efforts had marked the Unit's activities in 2015. On a substantive level, JIU had discharged its function as the only system-wide external oversight body, with a broad mandate for inspection, evaluation, and investigation. At the request of Member States, it had taken up complex assignments that examined the impact of United Nations system support for development objectives while maintaining its focus on improving the use of funds, as stipulated in article 5 of its statute.

97. The Unit had continued the reform of its internal procedures by strengthening quality assurance, improving management, oversight and accountability, suggesting new ways of bringing reports before legislative bodies, and producing guidelines for dealing systematically with comments from participating organizations.

98. The Unit had issued five system-wide reports, one report covering several organizations, and a series of management letters. In the near future, it would complete five more projects launched in 2015. It had strengthened its outreach and resource mobilization, enhanced its cooperation with United Nations management and oversight bodies, and undertaken two pilot projects mandated by the General Assembly for the independent system-wide evaluation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of the operational activities of the development system.

99. Among the system-wide reports pending issuance were a review of fraud prevention, detection and response in the United Nations system, which had attracted the interest of Governments and oversight communities in the light of the unusually low level of fraud reported by system organizations. With regard to single-organization reports, JIU had in recent years conducted at least one management and administration review per year. The organizations reviewed had acknowledged the usefulness of its contribution.

100. The Unit had focused on the strategic and operational dimensions of the activities of participating organizations, taking into account mandates from legislative bodies, proposals from organizations and oversight bodies, and risks associated with the system as a whole. It always bore in mind the objectives of enhancing effectiveness within and improving coordination among organizations.

101. In taking on complex assignments that required research, consultation and travel, JIU was aware that resources were strained. Its participation in such assignments, in addition to acting on specific legislative requests and addressing systemic high-risk issues, was worthwhile because the Unit brought to them the unique comparative advantage of its horizontal scope.

102. To make that approach feasible despite resource pressures, JIU had limited the number of assignments it had undertaken so that it could adequately support those selected, re-examined the way in which staff and financial support were allocated, sought extrabudgetary contributions and explored ways of enhancing its capacity. It would draw to the attention of legislative bodies the resource implications of their requests. The Unit would examine the deployment of its resources by reviewing the structure of its secretariat and consulting the relevant authorities, and would report on its findings.

103. Between 2005 and 2014, the average rate of acceptance of JIU recommendations in system-wide reports and reports covering several organizations had increased to 66 per cent, while the rate for single-organization reports and notes had increased to 82 per cent. The rates of implementation of recommendations in those categories were 80 per cent and 81 per cent. The Unit was pursuing a dialogue with the five smaller organizations, which had experienced difficulties implementing the recommendations in the system-wide reports.

104. The web-based tracking system for monitoring the acceptance and implementation of JIU recommendations had proved valuable. In response to General Assembly resolution 69/275, JIU had developed indicators of achievement to measure how the system had improved tracking, but support for the upgrading and maintenance of the system remained a challenge. The consideration by the Secretary-General of options for hosting the JIU website in-house, as requested by the Assembly in its resolution 70/247, was an opportunity to resolve the matter and improve the institutional arrangements of the system.

105. Ensuring that the legislative and governing bodies and the executive heads of participating organizations followed up on JIU findings and recommendations remained a challenge. The Unit would engage in dialogue with organizations throughout the preparation of reports and notes, and would facilitate legislative decisions by ensuring that recommendations were practical, actionable and trackable.

106. The seven projects in the programme of work for 2016 had been selected through consultation and addressed system-wide issues from a strategic, risk-based perspective. They covered administrative service delivery, knowledge management, travel policies, donor-led accountability and oversight, support for small island developing States, and the management and administration of two entities, and represented a balance between system-wide and single-organization reviews with varying degrees of complexity.

107. The year 2016 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of JIU. The Unit was committed to serving as the only system-wide independent external oversight mechanism and to meeting the requirements of the legislative and governing bodies of participating organizations while working closely with their executive heads. It would fulfil its mandate to enhance effectiveness and support coordination among the organizations, and would adapt to such new priorities as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

108. Four inspectors had left JIU at the end of 2015. With their replacements, the new composition included three women, the largest number ever.

109. **Mr. Herman** (United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination), introducing the Secretary-General's note on the report of JIU for 2015 (A/70/716), said that the note had been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 65/270, requesting the Secretary-General, as Chair of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), to expedite the implementation of the resolution and support JIU.

110. CEB was dedicated to helping JIU perform its critical function in the United Nations system. Each year, as the Unit prepared its programme of work, CEB helped solicit suggestions from agencies and suggested topics that JIU might wish to consider.

111. CEB and its secretariat compiled the Secretary-General's notes transmitting his comments and those of CEB on system-wide JIU reports, notes that reflected the views of all system organizations. CEB worked closely with the Unit in the preparation of reports, thereby contributing to a more substantive outcome, and of the JIU programme of work. In consequence, collaboration between CEB and the Unit had intensified, while the dialogue between the CEB and JIU secretariats had furthered their collective efforts to ensure that the system worked as one. The Secretary-General would work more closely with JIU to monitor and follow up on the implementation of its system-wide recommendations.

112. At the request of the Committee, JIU had focused on system-wide issues, as reflected in the results achieved in 2015 and the 2016 programme of work. As JIU implemented its strategic framework for 2010-2019 and increased its system-wide focus, the strain on the limited resources of the CEB secretariat would continue.

113. **Mr. Chamlongrasdr** (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group attached great importance to the work of JIU. The Group was concerned that the Unit's budget submission process did not comply with article 20 of its statute, which could affect its operational independence.

114. The Unit assisted the legislative organs of participating organizations in overseeing resource management and helped their secretariats achieve the mandates and objectives of the organizations. Legislative organs should discuss JIU reports and secretariats should implement accepted recommendations.

115. The Group welcomed the willingness of JIU to adapt to new priorities, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In particular, it welcomed

the pilot projects for evaluation in the context of the quadrennial policy review of the operational activities of the development system, and the concrete application of the Unit's mandate to examine the impact of support by the United Nations system for development objectives, in addition to the traditional focus on management, methods and efficient use of funds.

116. The Unit should improve its internal working procedures, develop a biennial work-planning cycle and implement peer review recommendations on the resource mobilization strategy, outreach and internal expertise.

117. The upgrading and maintenance of the web-based tracking system to monitor the acceptance and implementation of JIU recommendations remained a challenge. The request in General Assembly resolution 70/247 for the Secretary-General to consider options for hosting the JIU website in-house was an opportunity to resolve the matter.

118. The Group welcomed the fact that the seven new projects in the programme of work for 2016 addressed system-wide issues from a strategic and risk-based perspective. The Group would address the scope and objectives of the projects to ensure balance between system-wide and single-organization reviews.

119. Lastly, the recent improvement in the gender balance of the Unit must continue.

120. **Ms. Norman Chalet** (United States of America) said that JIU was essential to the efficient functioning of the United Nations system; her delegation welcomed its efforts to improve its working methods and conduct system-wide reviews. The Unit should continue refining its indicators to help decision-making by Member States.

121. She looked forward to the Unit's recommendations on travel policies, and its work on anti-fraud policies. As travel was the second largest expense of system organizations, efficient use of resources was required. Given the resource constraints noted in the report, JIU should mobilize resources and optimize their use to achieve its objectives.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.